

**Evergreen Fire District
Board of Trustees
Meeting**

**Meeting Minutes
Regular Board Meeting of July 18th, 2022 – 6:00 pm**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

Chairman Fallon calls the meeting to order at 6:24 pm.

August meeting is rescheduled for the 8th

TRUSTEES IN ATTENDANCE:

Fallon, Connolly, Brockman, Fontaine, Gipe

EFD PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Williams, Fire Marshal Covington

RECOGNIZE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE:

(none)

PUBLIC COMMENT: *At this time, public may comment on any public matter that is not on the Agenda of the Meeting and that is within the jurisdiction of the District.*

(none)

FINANCIALS:

Discuss and approve May 2022 Financials – *Action*

Motion; Fontaine to approve the financials as presented for all of the accounts; second by Gipe; passes 4 to 1 absent for vote.

PAST ITEMS/UPDATES:

1. Approve meeting minutes of June 6, 2022 – *Action*

Motion; Gipe to approve the meeting minutes of June 6th, 2022; second by Connolly; passes by 3, 1 abstention, 1 absent for the vote.

2. **West Valley Fire District Discussion – Update**

Chief Williams states an MOU has been developed and is currently being reviewed by the County Attorney. He is waiting for an update from West Valley Fire Chief. Kalispell will be servicing a small portion of the West Valley area (closest available resource) with negotiations continuing for the most northern portion of the area (Tronstad, Farm To Market etc.) to be picked up by Whitefish. If Whitefish declines then EFD will be responding and looking at a response time from 20 – 25 minutes which is still faster than what West Valley has been able to do because they are not staffed. WV will try to continue with their ambulance service for 6 months and respond to the draws (i.e.; McMannamy, Dern and etc.). EFD has officially picked up Village Greens from the City of Kalispell and will be responding to those calls as well as most of The Bluffs (City owned property behind Edgerton and down to California and a small section across Whitefish Stage). Kalispell is in development to build a third fire station somewhere off of 3 Mile.

3. **Trustmark Refund Discussion**

1 employee (58) has paid into their health plan \$10,477.85 and is eligible for a portion of the

Trustmark refund.

Motion; Connolly to continue to reimburse personnel (58) who paid out of pocket for their health plan 50% (\$5238.93) of what they paid into it (\$10,477.85) with the balance of the 2021 Trustmark refund being earmarked for future employer health insurance premiums; second by Fontaine; passes unanimously.

4 Preliminary Budget Discussion

Fallon starts with FY 2023 spreadsheet. Connolly inquires about the insurance item having increased and Chief Williams explains that until recently, Grachek had only 3 FT personnel listed and had to add 17 more for total of 20. Connolly inquires about the administrative assistant's wage increase when she moved into bookkeeping. Connolly states Cheri should not receive a bookkeeper wage for 40 hours a week because she won't be keeping books for 8 hrs. a day/5 days a week. He states her wage should be a blended wage. Chief Williams states it will be less for professional fees but higher for salary with the understanding that the District will still need a CPA for audit purposes. Chief Williams states he will rely on Fontaine and Fallon to determine wage and future wage increases for Cheri. Connolly inquires about 'fire training'. Covington states \$18,500 had been budgeted for the previous year but determined the kind of training needs to be more specified between EMS and Fire and states that travel costs should not be going against the training budget. Brockman inquires about the repairs budget and Fallon asks how many of the apparatus requiring multiple repairs will not be in service. Chief Williams states that 2 of the apparatus that incurred a lot of the repairs costs are being sold. Covington points out the fact that costs have gone up; an engine for an ambulance that cost \$7,000 four years ago is now \$20,000. Fallon moves on to the "District Administrative Personnel" line item which includes the admin assistant, Fire Marshal, and Fire Chief. "District Personnel" line item and who were being paid mileage and pager pay have become FT IFT which provides better cost and scheduling control for the Department and more stable employment for those personnel as well as reduces total costs. Fontaine asks if the wage increases has helped retain personnel and Chief Williams states it helped but that is an extremely competitive market currently and the District needs to remain competitive. COLA is discussed and all agree that it is 2.0 % for all. Fallon moves on to the "Medics". Fallon states the question marks are to decide if there will be 4 part time people or 2 full-time people brought on to help cover West Valley. Fallon moves on to "Benefits" which is currently at \$545 with a projected increase to \$1000 per eligible employee. Fallon and Chief Williams had agreed that improving the health benefits take priority over improving retirement because the majority of personnel are in their 20's and not interested in retirement. Fallon states that the HRA benefit should be revisited because the goal was to provide health benefits to personnel who didn't have any. Chief Williams states 85% of personnel have health insurance elsewhere from other employment and are hard pressed to find ways to spend HRA money so are buying items like AED's and etc. Connolly states that was not the intent of the Board when deciding to provide health benefits. Chief Williams further explores the District's ability to provide FERS. Fallon states FERS is a 14% employer contribution; PERS is an 8.5% employer contribution; 457 Plan is open but would require 3rd party administration fees. Brockman asks if the benefits could be left as is and increase pay for all. Fallon plugs in a 7% COLA for all personnel and it increased the total by \$20,000. Chief Williams states he would want to keep his COLA at 2%. Fallon states there was an increase of 6% for EMT's, Medics, admin assistant, and the Fire Marshal with a 2% increase for Chief Williams. There was a 10% increase for expenditures that are projected to be around \$220,000 per month. He moves on to revenue sources and states \$85,000 is a fact and Chief Williams states the District will pick up another \$40,000 to \$45,000 because of picking up West Valley's EMS mill levy. Fallon reiterates that the full voted levy amount was not applied last year (\$460,000) which left \$100,000 unused and states he increase the amount by 3% to apply the full voted levy mills for this fiscal year (\$561,000). Budgeted amount was increased 16% from the prior fiscal year. Fallon recalculates COLA increase back down to 2% so that there is enough funds to cover 4 months (through

November) with the expectation that Chief Williams can tell personnel that wage increases will be revisited in November, December or January after reviewing approximately 4 months of data on West Valley. Fallon moves on to vehicle replacement and states the engine and ladder trucks have been replaced; went from 4 to 3 chase rigs, replaced a brush rig, purchases SCBA and now would like to replace 2 of the 4 ambulances with 1 new and 1 'gently used' ambulances. He states wild land funds and funds from the 7207 hydrant grant (for this year only) could be used towards these purchases. Chief Williams states he is also looking into replacing the ambulance chassis and 'recycling' the 'box' which cuts the cost approximately in half. Fallon and Covington will revise all budgets except for the 7204 budget and vehicle replacement schedule spreadsheet and distribute them via email to all trustees prior to the August 8th meeting. Fallon states he will be calling Pete Davis (loan officer) at Glacier Bank to go over the payment plan.

NEW ITEMS:

1 Montana State Fund (Work Comp) Reimbursement Discussion - Action
(*\$9610.12*)

Chief Williams states that historically the dividend was used to pay for EMS training and certifications to reduce potential overtime for personnel to attend the required annual certification trainings. Historically, checks were distributed around Christmas time and were perceived as a 'Christmas bonus' by some personnel. This practice was discontinued last year. Chief Williams added this item to get the Board's direction on either continuing past practice or electing to do something different with the funds. Chief Williams states that the County Medical Director has required a series of additional certifications for Flathead County EMS providers that aren't required by the State. Initially, the County was going to pay for the extra required certifications due to the County EMS Director being the person to require them but the County didn't get it approved in their budget so passed the cost on to the fire districts. Chief Williams states that part of his hesitancy in continuing to pay for the certifications is that most of the Evergreen's EMS providers are working for other District's that benefit at Evergreen's expense. Connolly and Chief Williams agree that an MOU should be worked out with the Chiefs from the other districts.

Fallon states that the money is based on claims (or lack of) and asks how much of that is based on employees' behavior. Fontaine suggests that a portion of it be distributed to all personnel as a 'safety bonus' and earmark the rest for future expenses. Trustees decide on \$200 each for the 20 Full time/Part time employees. The Board will revisit this each year due to the dividend amount not being the same each time.

Motion; Brockman; that the 2019 Montana State Fund (work comp) dividend reimbursement be a distribution of \$200 per current employee as a safety bonus with the balance being retained by the District for future premiums; second by Gipe ; passes unanimously.

2. AFR Penalty Discussion

Chief Williams states that the AFR is now 6 months late (will be 7 months for July) to Local Government Services and has been incurring \$95 per month in late fees with \$570 having been paid so far. He asks the Board how they want to recover the costs. He states Cheri reminded him that Gilbertson made a \$500 'donation' of his time back in March without acknowledging it was to make up for accumulated late fees for the AFR. Currently Gilbertson owes the District money and it can either be billed or reduced from their final statement. Fontaine reminds Chief Williams that he has intended to push Gilbertson for the AFR prior to ending services with him. Chief Williams states he has already informed Gilbertson that the District is parting ways after the 3rd and believes Bryan has no intention of producing the AFR. Brockman asks who will do the report and Fontaine states she has spoken with the prior accountant (Ashley) and she has agreed to help her produce the report.

Motion; Gipe to withhold \$165.00 in late fees for the Annual Financial Report to the Statement of Montana from the final payment to Gilbertson ; second by Brockman; passes unanimously.

CHIEF'S REPORT:

1. May 2022 Call Volume

A) Comparison Incident Count by Weekday/Hour (all zones) for May 2022

B) Comparison Incident Statistics for May 2022

193 EMS calls May of 2022 vs. 253 May 2021

30 Fire calls May of 2022 vs. 44 May 2021

YTD (Jan – May 30th 2022) 1051 EMS calls vs. 1259 YTD 2021

YTD (Jan – May 30th 2022) 169 Fire calls vs. 230 YTD 2021

YTD (Jan – May 2022) 499 IFT's vs. 704 IFT's YTD 2021

Chief Williams states this is the first time in 10 years that the stats don't show an increase in call volume and states all districts are down in volume with exception of 3 Rivers the month due to uptick in tourists. Kalispell is 21% down and Whitefish is 19% down in volume.

Fallon asks what total collections are vs. percentage and Chief Williams states that data isn't known at this point. Chief Williams states some of the artificiality is that some of the IFT's were guaranteed pays (i.e.; Pathways) with Logan Health but the district lost those to Logan. He states he still needs more staff but it's difficult to do when the volume is down.

Chief Williams states he will speak with Pintler Billing to see if he can get a percentages report.

Adjourn@ 9:01 pm.

The President of the Board of Trustees, as presiding officer of any meeting of the Board of Trustees, may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy; and, then, if, and only if, the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains; and, in that event, the meeting must be open.


(Board Chair Fallon or Vice Chair Connolly)
(Secretary Brockman)